

TRANSPORTATION, HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2013

SPEECH OF

HON. SUZANNE BONAMICI

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 26, 2012

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 5972) making appropriations for the Departments of Transportation, and Housing and Urban Development, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2013, and for other purposes:

Ms. BONAMICI. Mr. Chair, I rise to urge my colleagues to work together to pass a comprehensive transportation bill before current law expires at the end of this week. The First District of Oregon is home to some of the country's most innovative thinkers, many of whom work at the technology giant Intel. Unfortunately, one of the biggest challenges of their workday often comes before it even starts, and continues after it ends: it is their commute. The roads leading to the "Silicon Forest," as the technology cluster in Oregon is known, can back up for miles—a good sign for the economy, but bad for our transportation infrastructure.

The City of Hillsboro is home to many innovative tech companies. When the City applied for a TIGER grant to improve mobility and reduce congestion in the Silicon Forest, I supported their application. Infrastructure investments like this make it easier for people to get to work and they facilitate efficient transport of goods to market. This project wasn't selected by the Department of Transportation, but the application highlighted an important point. Investing in our transportation infrastructure is an economic multiplier. Not only do we employ hard-working Americans by building and maintaining infrastructure, we also improve the productivity and vibrancy of the workers who rely on the infrastructure to get to their workplace every morning.

Infrastructure improvements are important for safety as well. The Portland metro area is nationally renowned as a bike-friendly community, and our companies attract highly qualified employees in part because of the safe, multimodal transportation network in our region. Maintaining this infrastructure is critical to continuing to bring new businesses into our communities; investment in infrastructure will help to keep our roads and transportation routes safe.

So now, even though virtually every elected official talks about jobs as a first priority, somehow this transportation bill is stalling. We all agree that passing a surface transportation bill will create jobs. Let's do what is best for our constituents and pass a bill that keeps our construction workers on the job, reduces congestion for our commuters, and supports our struggling economy.

CONGRATULATING THE NATIONAL ACTIVE AND RETIRED FEDERAL EMPLOYEES DULLES CHAPTER 1241 ON ITS 40TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 27, 2012

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate the National Active and Retired Federal Employees Dulles Chapter 1241 on the occasion of its 40th anniversary. The Northern Virginia region is home to more than 160,000 federal employees and a large number of retirees who have chosen to stay in the region. Throughout their careers, these dedicated civil servants give their time and effort to serving their fellow Americans, and NARFE consistently has provided them with coordinated support.

NARFE is increasingly important in these challenging budgetary times when many proposals would seek to single out federal workers and retirees and make draconian cuts to federal retirements and health care. The federal government, regardless of the size one feels is appropriate, cannot function efficiently or effectively without the hard work and expertise of dedicated employees. Federal workers devote years of their lives in service to the nation; the government could not function without their expertise, and it is imperative that they are treated fairly. For the past 40 years, NARFE Chapter 1241 has ably advocated on behalf of the dedicated civil servants in the Northern Virginia region.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in congratulating NARFE Chapter 1241 for 40 years of service to our federal workers and to wish them continued success protecting the rights of current and future federal workers and retirees.

IN SUPPORT OF RESTORING FUNDING FOR NATIVE HAWAIIAN HOUSING PROGRAMS FISCAL YEAR 2013 TRANSPORTATION, HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS BILL

HON. MAZIE K. HIRONO

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 27, 2012

Ms. HIRONO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of restoring funding for Native Hawaiian housing programs.

The bill before us zeroes out funding for Native Hawaiian housing programs.

This is disappointing for the Native Hawaiian community and the families that need assistance from these programs.

It is also disappointing because Congress has a long history of bipartisan support for Native Hawaiian housing—and a responsibility to continue this legacy.

It has been nearly a century since the passage of the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act. Congress passed this Act in 1921 at the urging of Hawaii's Delegate to Congress, Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalanianaʻole. That legislation set aside some 200,000 acres of land to provide homesteads specifically for Native Hawaiians.

With the enactment of the Statehood Act of 1959, the control and administration of the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act was transferred from the federal government to the new State of Hawaii. A year later in 1960, the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands, DHHL, was created to administer the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act.

Then in 2000, Congress passed the American Homeownership and Economic Opportunity Act.

This legislation established two programs to help provide housing to Native Hawaiians: The Native Hawaiian Housing Block Grant, NHHBG, Program and the Section 184A loan guarantee program.

Hawaii has some of the most expensive real estate prices in the country. At the same time, more than 33,200 Native Hawaiian households are considered low-income. So without support from the NHHBG and 184A programs, many Native Hawaiians would not have access to quality, affordable housing. The grant funds are used primarily to develop infrastructure on Hawaiian Home Lands, which tend to be in the most isolated parts of our islands, typically in rural areas, and some with terrain that is difficult and costly to develop.

Not only are these programs necessary but they are effective.

For example, in FY2011 Native Hawaiian Housing Block Grant funds were used to build 55 new homes, acquire 12 homes, and rehabilitate 12 homes. In addition, the Section 184A program has supported 255 home loans totaling \$64.4 million. This program also has a strong track record, with a foreclosure rate below 1 percent.

That's 79 new units of housing and 255 opportunities for Native Hawaiians to access financing for their own homes that would not have existed absent the NHHBG and 184A programs. These are real people in real homes—They are not statistics.

The bottom line is that these programs don't just provide housing—they expand opportunities for homeownership.

Owning a home has long been a pillar of the American dream. This is a dream that people do not forget, and do not give up on.

In fact, over 26,000 eligible families are currently on waiting lists for an opportunity to live on their home lands.

There are many stories of Native Hawaiians who have been on waiting lists for decades. In fact, some have died waiting to see this dream fulfilled.

Eliminating these funds—which total \$14 million for the two programs—won't solve our budget woes. All it will accomplish is closing off opportunities for a community that utilizes federal funds effectively.

This is the type of program that makes a difference in the lives of people by supporting strong communities and expanding opportunity.

There is a continued need for Native Hawaiian housing programs and I urge my colleagues to carry on Congress's bipartisan support for making the American dream of homeownership possible.

I hope that this matter will be resolved as the House and Senate negotiate a final Transportation-HUD Appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2013.

Mahalo nui loa (thank you very much).